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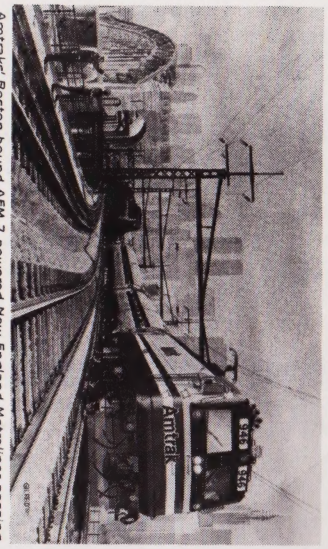
VOL. 13 NO. 1
JANUARY 1983
ISSUE NO. 259

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

TAKE AMTRAK FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER.



Amtrak's Boston-bound AEM-7 powered New England Metroliner passing the museum-bound GG-1 on the historic Hell Gate Bridge.

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This year's calendar features another beautiful painting by artist Gil Reid, from a series done exclusively for Amtrak.

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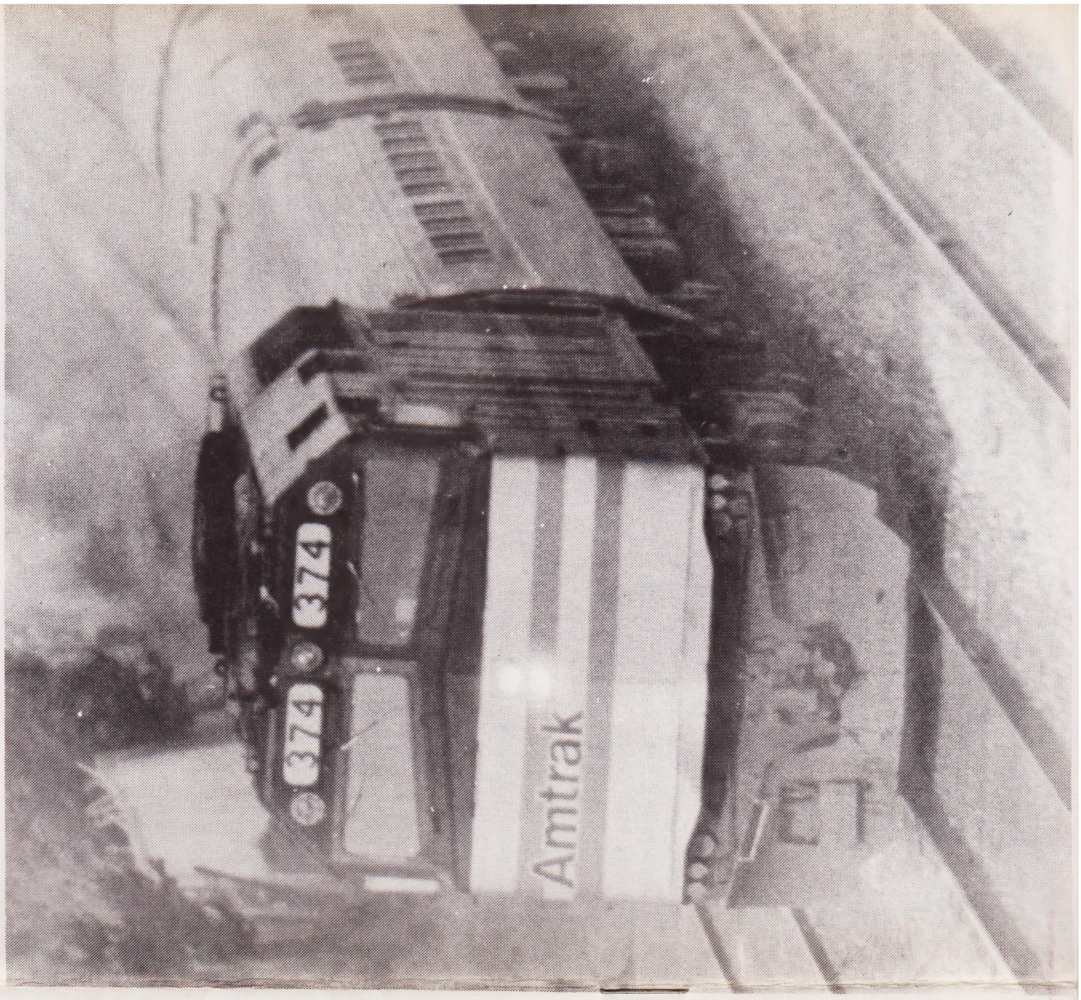

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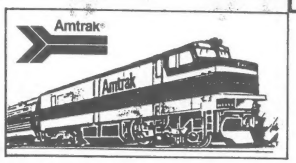

ACCENT ON TRAVEL

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LETTERS

Issue no. 257 has an item on page 15 stating that Southern Steam Engine 2716 may be the next engine out of our Birmingham Shop. This is not the case. S&A 750, our light Pacific, is next in line as we need a smaller engine to operate where N&W 611 cannot operate because of size and weight restrictions.

James A. Bistline, General Manager, Steam Operations
Norfolk Southern Corporation
Washington DC

It seems Amtrak has finally made it! Two days ago I arrived at Boston's South Station on Amtrak's YANKEE CLIPPER. As I detrained and walked into the terminal I really had the feeling that the rail travel business was functioning as it should be. Train crews were directing and helping passengers, redcaps right there ready to help with baggage, and a general sense of both travelers' and commuters' needs being attended to; this I believe is what the public envisions travel was like 20 and 30 years ago. It is great that we can now count on this to be the case again.

(continued on page 22)

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ON THE COVER

The SAN JOAQUIN, train 711, moves thru Emeryville CA for another on-time arrival at Oakland, on January 6. The 711 is one of four runs (two roundtrips) of the SAN JOAQUIN that would be eliminated in Governor Deukmejian's proposed budget for the state of California this year. The SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA also would be cut out, as would the Oxnard-Los Angeles commuter trains and all of Caltrans's connecting buses. Full details are in this issue of RTN.

ELIZABETH DOLE PICKED AS FIRST WOMAN SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

President Reagan announced on Jan 5 that he had chosen Elizabeth H. Dole to replace the resigning Drew Lewis as Secretary of Transportation. Mrs. Dole, 46, is the wife of Senator Robert Dole, Republican of Kansas, who is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. She is currently presidential assistant for public liaison.

Previously, President Reagan asked Chrysler Corporation chairman Lee Iacocca to take the job, but he refused.

The resignation of Drew Lewis, effective Feb 1, was reported in our last issue. NARP said that Lewis had (rather surprisingly) testified before Congress in support of a $70 million project to convert Washington DC Union Station back into a rail station. (The plan calls for extending the tracks back where they should be and installing an automated baggage handling system.)

Welcome to the first issue of 1983! And a special welcome to the many new subscribers who have recently joined us.

The year just past was a good one for RTN. We know from your comments that you have noticed and appreciate our efforts to improve RTN. There was noticeable improvement over the course of 1982, but 1983 should bring the best improvements yet. Our number one priority is keeping RTN appearing on time. We did a better job of that in 1982, for we produced 22 of the 24 scheduled issues. In 1983 we aim to get all 24 of them out.

As to the trains, the year begins with some sour notes; there are very grave threats to the existence of a large proportion of California's trains. The continuing recession makes things difficult for all publicly funded trains, and there are periodic threats to reduce budgets because of meager amounts in public purses.

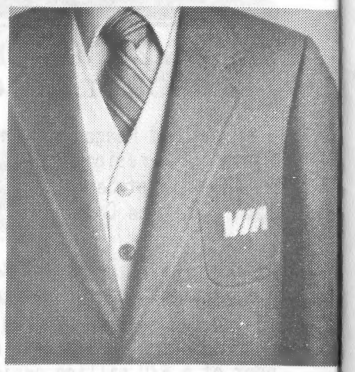
As to Amtrak, the corporation is in a very good period. It has really begun to come into its own, a process which seemed to begin with the introduction of Superliner equipment in late 1980. Former Amtrak president Alan Boyd moved the corporation into new areas of income thru means other than passenger carrying: real estate, package express, etc. These additions give Amtrak added security, and the steadily rising income of Amtrak makes the corporation more palatable to money-conscious bureaucrats. Under Boyd, relations with Capitol Hill and the White House became almost as good as they possibly can.

Amtrak's new president Graham Claytor hasn't yet put his imprint clearly upon Amtrak, but his style is beginning to make itself known. Under Claytor we think you can expect Amtrak to be run more like a business than a government agency, and the trains will begin to seem more like the trains of the better private railroads before the Amtrak era. We wouldn't be surprised if Claytor finds a way to bring back much of the service and amenities that others had thought were not possible under a quasi-governmental passenger system.

News in this issue is updated thru Jan 17, 1983.

RAIL CANADA

CANADIAN BUS INDUSTRY is attacking VIA Rail, finding it too competitive in the intercity travel market. The Canadian Motor Coach Association, which represents 11 bus companies, recently complained that VIA is focusing its attention on the most lucrative routes, those with the highest traffic, while abandoning routes in rural areas, which is just what the bus operators would like to do themselves. The association warned that unless VIA withdraws its competitiveness on heavy routes, the buses would need higher fares and abandonments of rural lines.



VIA'S NEW UNIFORMS are pictured in a recent color brochure prepared for VIA employees. Shown here is a cover illustration from the folder, of a dining car steward's uniform. The coat is gray and the vest and "VIA" lettering are yellow, repeating the color scheme of VIA equipment. The yellow is prominent on food service personnel uniforms. Colors in other uniforms are gray and burgundy, and charcoal gray vests for sleeping car personnel. Striped shirt and tie, and gray pants are common to all men's uniforms. Women have similar striped blouse and bow and choice of gray pants or skirt.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT is raising the question of whether rail passenger service in Canada should not be dropped altogether. The Auditor General has issued a report on VIA Rail Canada which warns that "It is highly unlikely that federal payments to VIA can be contained within the limits set by cabinet in 1981 when major cutbacks were ordered." The Auditor General stated that subsidies to VIA amount to an average of $50 per passenger. Concludes the report, "the role of railway passenger services needs to be more precisely defined, particularly in relation to remote corridor, transcontinental and regional services... It is important to note that an assessment of whether rail services are the best way of satisfying the travelling public's needs should include the possibility that they may not be justified when compared to competing modes of transportation."

AN OTTAWA NEWSPAPER, The Citizen, recently editorialized about the Auditor General's report on VIA (described above), agreeing that subsidies to VIA are inefficient and too expensive. "Perhaps the smartest decision made by VIA in the previous viscal year was the 20-per-cent reduction in services announced by Transport Minister Jean-Luc Pepin."

VIA RAIL TOURS: For the third consecutive year, VIA has special tours for the Carnaval-Souvenir of Chicoutimi, in the "Old-Timers Train". They run two weekends, leaving Montreal Feb 5 and 12, and returning the following Sundays. And again this year VIA will run trains to the Ottawa Winterlude. The winter event runs Feb 4-13. The famous Rideau Canal is frozen over and is the site of myriad skating and other ice events. The price from Montreal is $53, including train fare and one night at the Lord Elgin (double-occupancy price).

CANADA'S STOL PROJECT (Short Takeoff and Landing) which was announced late last summer, was blasted in a Dec 31 release by Guy Chartrand, president of Transport 2000 Canada. Chartrand said the project is causing a controversy for these reasons: (1) It will be used mostly by politicians and the affluent and not by the majority of passengers in the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto route where it is to be inaugurated by about Feb 1984; (2) It will save only 20 minutes over regular jet service; (3) It will rob airlines on the route of about 25% of their customers, causing more serious financial problems for them; (4) The $92 million the taxpayer would be putting in represents a big risk, for there are no assurances the money would be recouped; and (5) The failure of the costly Mirabel airport gives one second thoughts on an expensive new air service. Chartrand asked rhetorically "Will (Transport Minister) Pepin take the cuts in rail passenger service to the Maritimes and the West, which were supposed to have saved $100 million, and reinvest the money in non-essential services like STOL?"

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

PASSAGE OF MICHIGAN'S State Transit package keeps SEMTA from shutting down the Pontiac commuter trains as previously planned. It is not known whether previously cut runs would be restored. This package also saved a large number of bus runs. Also, the courts have turned over to SEMTA tax money tied up in courts from a Tri-County (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb) tax for transit on license plate registrations. The $2 billion-over-5-years package includes three major elements: 2¢ a gallon gas tax; 15% car registration fee increase; and 30% increase in commercial vehicle fees. The funds will be split between highways and other transit. The package causes renewed interest in the real possibility of new Bus-Train station for Flint. The new location is tentatively set for Dort Highway behind the Flint Mass Transit Authority garage and adjacent to the C&O and GTW interchange. The station would also house over 30 daily Indian Trails and Greyhound runs.

THE DEUKMEJIAN ADMINISTRATION in California has scheduled $450 million in highway building projects for 1983, including $200 million worth that will come from funds generated by the new 5¢ per gallon federal gas tax. At the same time, it is attempting to cut out $11 million in commuter train and Amtrak 403-b projects.

CONRAIL COMMUTER LINES takeover by local agencies in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania at the start of the year went pretty smoothly. Jan 3 was the first big day of commuting under the new operators. SEPTA ran about 108 trains instead of its normal 550, as per the plan described last issue, and it said it would resume full service on Jan 6. New Jersey Transit said early in the month that it had reached tentative agreements with most of the unions involved in the takeover. New York's MTA was running normal schedules Jan 3, and had announced some contract agreements, altho the big UTU was setting a 30-day limit on work without a contract agreement.

METRO-NORTH COMMUTER RAILROAD COMPANY, a division of the MTA, on Jan 1 began operating the former Conrail Harlem, Hudson and New Haven Lines; connecting service on the New Haven to Danbury CT, Waterbury CT and New Canaan CT. Also, by a service agreement with NJTransit, commuter rail service between Port Jervis NY and Hoboken NJ, and Spring Valley NY and Hoboken. Metro-North has about 5150 employees; the company was officially formed on Sep 16, 1982. It operates about 500 trains each weekday, with an estimated daily ridership of 175,000.

OXNARD COMMUTER TRAIN is using equipment borrowed from the San Francisco Caltrain line. It cannot use the RTA commuter cars it leased because the P30 locomotives it planned to handle them are being studied for accident-proneness. The Chicago RTA cars, now sitting idle, are nos. 7315, 7301, 7316, 7286, 7314 and 7309. They were moved to Los Angeles on the rear of the SOUTHWEST LIMITED of Nov 12.

PITTSBURGH SUBWAY CONSTRUCTION began a year ago, on Jan 4, 1982, and on the year anniversary of that date subway officials said it would be running by late 1984. The subway portion of the $480 million light rail system is 1.1 miles long.

CUMBERLAND AVENUE STATION on Chicago's new O'Hare rapid transit extension was dedicated Dec 2 by Mayor Jane Byrne, who rode the first train to operate over the extension that date. The line will officially open early in February.

50 NEW YORK SUBWAY stations were blocked from being renovated when a state court on Jan 4 ruled they do not have adequate facilities for the handicapped. The Governor wants more control over New York's MTA, and has ordered a special study of the agency to advance that end.

HOW MUCH LONGER WILL CANADIANS WATCH THEIR TRAINS DISAPPEAR INTO OBLIVION?

by Guy Chartrand

On July 27, 1981 Transport Minister Jean-Luc Pepin announced a new Federal Government program to revitalize and reshape Canada's passenger train services to meet the needs of the coming decade. However, part of that revitalization included the cutback of 20% of our country's passenger routes, some of which were heavily-patronized. Mr. Pepin said "It is necessary that the action be taken now in order to provide money for the equipment and other improvements that VIA needs to guarantee its future as a national and viable public transportation system." Only a year and a half later, we are learning that VIA Rail is in deep trouble, more than at any time in its short history. What happened? Why is VIA Rail so vulnerable?

Two main reasons could explain this unbelievable situation. First, when VIA Rail was created in 1977, it was established by means of a procedural device known as a "$1 vote." The effect of that procedure was to deny Members of Parliament any opportunity to debate the wisdom of creating this important corporation. There was unfortunately no VIA Rail Act.

The VIA Rail management has never had the power to negotiate fixed-price contracts with both Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways for the services they render. VIA Rail receives an additional billing at the end of each year from the two railway companies, which totalled $16.7 million for 1980 over and above the $340 million already paid for that year. As a former executive of VIA Rail once said, "VIA Rail has to run like hell to stand still."

In 1981 the government decided to cut passenger train services because it felt that the deficit was too high. The Minister of Transport and the Cabinet, instead of trying to solve the problems once and for all, decided to cut a hefty 20% of the services, without any public hearings, hoping that some of the money saved could be reinvested in badly needed new equipment; this being the second erroneous calculation which resulted in a large public outcry.

In the House of Commons on October 20, 1981 Mr. Pepin said "The Government contribution to VIA in 1980-81 was $450 million and it will reach $490 million in 1981-82." A few weeks later, the Auditor General, Mr. Kenneth Dye, in his annual report said that VIA Rail's total cost to the taxpayers was $540 million in 1981. In addition to these figures, during a debate at the House of Commons Standing Transport Committee on November 18, 1982, it was said that the deficit of VIA Rail could reach $640 million in 1982, when capital expenditures are included. So, we must conclude that even with important cutbacks, that the financial situation of VIA has deteriorated. The drop in passengers (the first since 1977) was over 1 million in 1982, compared to 1981, mainly because of the route abandonments. The second main reason for the huge deficit is the unreliable and expensive-to-maintain fleet of equipment that VIA bought at questionable prices (over $60 million) for both CN and CP. For example, in 1980, out of VIA's total of 865 cars, 779 (90%) were built before 1955. Moreover, all VIA's diesel engines are railiners were built before 1960.

Meanwhile, the U.S. counterpart of VIA Rail, Amtrak, is operating more efficiently. The Amtrak cost/revenue ratio which was 42.1% in 1981, is now reaching 50.1%. The on-time performance of Amtrak trains was 80% in 1982, much better than their 57% average in 1979. Amtrak has better control over its costs and pays the operating railroads only what are called "strictly avoidable costs", which essentially are those costs that the railroad can prove were incurred only because of services undertaken for Amtrak.

VIA Rail, however, is billed for "long run variable costs," which include expenses that do not directly result from provision of services to the passenger carrier. Amtrak can also make some additional profits with mail contracts and operates its own parcel service. Amtrak also owns its repair facilities and major train stations (VIA doesn't), and operates a fleet of over 1300 new passenger cars and diesels. The merits of these improvements have been shown thru Amtrak's better performance. The Amtrak operating deficit has decreased. It was $720 million in 1979, and is now $555 million in 1982 (in 1979 dollars it was only $433 million).

We predict that without better transportation policies and programs from Ottawa in the next few months, VIA Rail could collapse. The government has already been warned of this several times in the past, even by the ex-president of VIA Rail, Mr. Frank Roberts.

Let's hope for a better passenger train service in Canada.

Guy Chartrand is president of Transport 2000 Canada.

A PROPOSAL TO RESTORE ST. LOUIS-CARBONDALE RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE

by William G. Wullenjohn

It is proposed that the ST. LOUIS MULE and KANSAS CITY MULE be extended to Carbondale, Illinois via the Illinois Central Gulf in order to connect with the Chicago-New Orleans CITY OF NEW ORLEANS. It is further proposed that a thru baggage car, sleeping car and coach be operated between Kansas City and New Orleans. This service extension would provide the following benefits:

1) Provide a direct connection with the MULE trains. The current train service which is in effect isolated at both end points is inherently weak. This connection would dramatically improve the performance of the MULE trains and result in fewer subsidy dollars needed by the state and federal governments.

2) The extension is cost-effective. The incremental revenues exceed the incremental expenses.

3) Open up new travel markets. Trips would be possible between such markets as Kansas City - Memphis; St. Louis - Memphis; Kansas City - New Orleans; St. Louis - New Orleans; Bloomington - Carbondale; Springfield - Memphis; Belleville - Chicago; and many, many others.

4) Replaces an extremely inconvenient middle-of-the-night connection and a long layover bus link via Gulf Transport.

5) Offers checked baggage and express service to Kansas City, Jefferson City, Kirkwood, St. Louis and points south (or north).

6) Opens the possibility for a U.S. mail contract.

7) Offers first class service between Kansas City and points south.

8) Adds only 190.8 train miles per day.

9) The extension is only 95.4 miles long, of which 21.4 miles are currently traversed by passenger trains.

10) The track is currently in good shape. The ICG employee timetable lists 50 mph freight speeds on the freight-only segment and 79mph speeds on the passenger/freight portion. It is possible that passenger speeds could be raised to 79mph on the current freight-only portion.

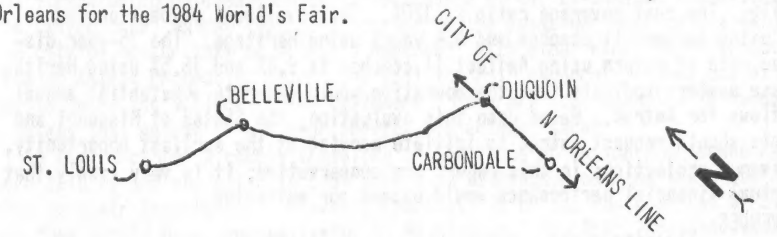
11) Belleville, Illinois would be added as an unmanned passenger stop, and would draw upon numerous Metro-East cities for ridership.

12) Offers Missouri and Illinois residents good service to the college campus at Carbondale.

13) Allows thru equipment to be serviced and based at New Orleans.

14) Does not require addition of any station personnel or construction of additional facilities, except for Belleville, Illinois.

15) Would provide Missouri residents with direct rail passenger service to New Orleans for the 1984 World's Fair.



In order to permit a timely connection between the eastbound ST. LOUIS MULE and the southbound CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, it is proposed that the CITY depart Chicago at 8:10pm rather than the current 6:10pm. The positive effects of this are:

1) A good connection is made at Carbondale to receive passengers from Kansas City and the southbound EAGLE.

2) Arrival times are more marketable at Memphis. The train will arrive at 6:25am instead of 4:25am, permitting overnight trips from Chicago, Kansas City and St. Louis to Memphis.

3) Two hours of extra servicing time are provided at Chicago.

4) Two hours less of train idle time at New Orleans are necessary.

5) Connections from the CARDINAL, MARQUETTE and INTERNATIONAL are improved or made practical.

The negative effects are:

(1) Eastbound connection with SUNSET LIMITED is broken; however, it is believed that this connection provided few if any passengers since there exists no connection between the eastbound SUNSET and the northbound CITY.

2) Connection times at Chicago are lengthened for some trains (LAKE CITIES points beyond Battle Creek, EMPIRE BUILDER, LAKE SHORE and SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR).

3) Arrival times at Carbondale are set back to 1:32am from 11:32pm, which may cause some student inconvenience, but we believe it would be minor.

4) Arrival times at New Orleans are set back from 12:15pm to 2:15pm.

It is proposed that the ST. LOUIS MULE and the KANSAS CITY MULE have the following equipment assignments: F40 locomotive, baggage car, 10/6 sleeper, Amfleet II or Heritage coach, (Kansas City-St. Louis only:) 32-seat Amdinette, 84-seat Amcoach. The latter two cars would operate to Carbondale and return on Fridays, holidays and other peak demand periods.

This equipment assignment would require additional equipment: 2 F40 locomotives, 3 baggage cars, 3 10/6 sleepers, and 3 Amfleet II coaches or Heritage coaches. The assignment would release from the current service one 84-seat Amcoach. As an option, Amtrak could consider the rehabilitation and HEP conversion of three dome sleeping cars, ex-Northern Pacific, now in storage.

William G. Wullenjohn is a member of the National Association of Railroad Passengers.

Word came via NARP shortly before we went to press that Amtrak is now reviewing the proposed extension of the MULES to Carbondale. The city council of Belleville IL has endorsed the proposal. There has been no rail passenger service between St. Louis and Carbondale since Amtrak took over on May 1, 1971.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the MULE extension, it is proposed that Amtrak negotiate with the MoFac and ICG unions to reduce labor costs.

The proposed operation should generate annual revenues of $4,445,865 using conservative estimates. The associated annual expenses are estimated at $3,715,310. Amtrak would be required to supply railroad equipment for this operation at an estimated current value of $5,600,000 if Amfleet II coaches are used and $3,980,000 if Heritage fleet coaches are used. An optional expense included in this analysis is for possible station improvements at Belleville IL, $30,000.

The operation would generate an excess of revenues over expenses of $730,555 annually. The cost coverage ratio is 120%. The investment payback period is 7.7 years using Amfleet II coaches and 5.4 years using Heritage. The 15-year discounted rate of return using Amfleet II coaches is 9.8% and 16.5% using Heritage.

These numbers indicate that the operation would generate substantial annual cash flows for Amtrak. Based upon this evaluation, the States of Missouri and Illinois should request Amtrak to initiate service at the earliest opportunity.

(Revenue projections in this report are conservative; it is very likely that the actual financial performance would exceed our estimates.)

REVENUES:		
	Sleeping cars	$1,428,975
	Coaches	2,560,840
	Express	175,000
	Connecting trains	281,050
	TOTAL REVENUES	4,445,865
EXPENSES:		
	Bridge fee	$ 33,916
	Baggageman	159,979
	ICG train crew	258,694
	Locomotive expense	1,286,625
	Car expense	1,467,848
	Attendant expense	350,948
	TRRA trackage right expense	7,300
	Overhead payments to MoPac and ICG	50,000
	Advertising	50,000
	Miscellaneous expenses	50,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES	3,715,310
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES		730,555
COST COVERAGE RATIO		120%

The mayor of Belleville IL has indicated that the former ICG station and site is in sound condition and could be made available for Amtrak use. The station and property are currently owned by a private party and not ICG. The mayor appeared very enthusiastic about restoring service to his community.

DON'T PANIC ON AMTRAK

How the Rail Corporation Takes Pains to See That Its Riders Travel Safely and Reach Their Destinations All in One Piece

In RTN's "Panic Box" series we list major unusual occurrences that affect entire trains. But what happens to an individual who has a special problem while riding an Amtrak train? What would happen if you discovered that aboard an Amtrak train your money had been lost? Or you suddenly took ill? Or missed your stop and had traveled 50 miles beyond it? Such things happen to riders almost daily on Amtrak, but the situations are too minor to list in the "Panic Box." Here we try to give an idea of what you could expect Amtrak to do in one of these situations. The examples below, taken from Amtrak records, give an idea of the problems that happen to travelers and how Amtrak tries to handle them.

The most common major unusual occurrences involving individual passengers on Amtrak trains generally fall into the categories of illness to a passenger, injuries aboard a train (commonly injuring hands in doors or seat adjustment mechanisms or falling down Superliner stairs), a passenger being carried by (failing to detrain at the proper station), or losing money or baggage by accident or theft. In addition, there is the fairly common occurrence of a passenger on an international train being refused permission to cross a border by customs inspectors. In the latter case, Amtrak typically transports the passenger back to his originating city by bus or taxi at Amtrak's expense. With other kinds of occurrences, a look at Amtrak records convinces one that the rail corporation goes out of its way to guard the welfare of its customers. Here are some examples of recent problems that Amtrak's Passenger Services Department faced.

In early October a couple traveling to Charlotte NC on the southbound PALMETTO were told by the conductor to stay aboard at Washington and the train would take them to their destination. However, Charlotte is on the route of the CRESCENT, and they should have changed trains in Washington. The RF&P crew that came on at Washington discovered the error after the train had departed, and it was corrected by having the couple stay aboard as far as Rocky Mount NC, where they were transferred to a bus for Charlotte, at Amtrak's expense. They were given complimentary meals aboard the PALMETTO.

A woman passenger traveling southbound on the CRESCENT in late July was injured when the lid on a towel dispenser in the women's lounge fell open and hit her on the head. The woman complained of a headache and was given aspirin by the crew, but refused further medical attention which was offered.

In mid-July a passenger at Redding CA boarded the northbound COAST STARLIGHT instead of the southbound train, in error. The passenger reportedly became hysterical and insisted on being let off the train in order to board no. 11. Due to her hysteria and insistence, and failure to be calmed by the crew's efforts, the crew arranged for no. 14 to make a special stop at a passing siding near Dunsmuir and she was assisted off the train. Train 11 was given special instructions to stop and pick her up, which it did without further incident. (The two trains stopped alongside each other at the siding.)

A woman passenger last July, traveling to Erie PA on the westbound LAKE SHORE, was mistakenly detrained at Rochester by the conductor. At Amtrak's expense, she was put on a bus to Erie and given a complimentary breakfast.

In a typical carry-by incident, an elderly male passenger, also on the westbound LAKE SHORE last summer, was carried by to Syracuse, when he was bound for Utica. As there was no convenient bus schedule to Utica, Amtrak put him in a taxi at its own expense to return to his desired destination.

Two women passengers suffered minor leg injuries when the outside door of an Amfleet car closed on them while they were detraining at Beltway Station MD from a NE Corridor train last summer. A trainman stayed behind to assist them, and a patrol car was called from Baltimore to the scene. First aid was administered.

A father and his four children, traveling on the DESERT WIND to Burlington IA last summer ran into a health problem. The father suffered an insulin attack, and Amtrak had to detrain him at Salt Lake City, to be sent to a hospital. The four children remained aboard, and Amtrak arranged to take care of their meals and see that they met their mother at Burlington.

A 16-year old boy, traveling alone from Portland to Los Angeles on the COAST STARLIGHT last June, had to be detrained at Klamath Falls because of an appendicitis attack. The Chemult Volunteer Ambulance took him to a hospital and Amtrak contacted his father in Los Angeles to advise him of the emergency.

A passenger traveling with her husband on the northbound COAST STARLIGHT cut her middle finger severely while adjusting a coach seat on a Superliner car near Roseville CA. The train made a special stop at Roseville and she was taken to a hospital, where her finger required three stitches. Amtrak paid for a taxi to take her home to Sacramento, and evidently was paying also for the medical treatment.

A passenger on the southbound CITY OF NEW ORLEANS last spring had a coach end door slam on her left hand, breaking two fingers. Amtrak detrained the passenger at Champaign IL, where she was treated at a hospital. She was housed overnight at a motel, and continued her trip to Mississippi on the next day's train.

A man bought tickets one evening last spring at New York's Penn Station to travel the next day on the PALMETTO to Charleston SC to attend his father's funeral. As he checked his baggage, he discovered that he had been pickpocketed, and his tickets and checkbook were gone. The Amtrak station supervisor arranged for a replacement no-value ticket for him, and filed a police report.

The eastbound LAKE SHORE LIMITED missed a stop at Amsterdam NY one morning last spring, to pick up a high school group traveling to Worcester MA. The train was then held at Albany and the group was taxied there at a cost of $148 to Amtrak.

A non-English-speaking passenger on the northbound COAST STARLIGHT late last spring was accidentally carried-by to San Jose (her destination was Salinas, and then Monterey by bus). A detraining crew member accompanied the passenger to the bus station to be sure she boarded the correct bus, while the Amtrak agent called her friends in Monterey to advise them that she would arrive by a late bus.

On the same day, a 10-year old boy traveling alone on the southbound SILVER METEOR was detrained at Jacksonville because he did not have a ticket, did not know

his address, and had no telephone. He was traveling to visit his grandmother, but he did not know her address, and she had no telephone. He had no luggage. Amtrak put the boy in the custody of the Jacksonville Juvenile Shelter, who was to try to determine the location of his relatives.

A 14-year old boy, attending school in Utah, was to travel home to Pendleton, Oregon from Salt Lake City on the PIONEER late last spring. A travel agent had made an error and given the boy only the invoice and not the tickets. When the traveler arrived by bus at Salt Lake to board the train, the conductor refused to board him. However, Amtrak officials came to the rescue to prevent him from being stranded, as he had little money. Giving him a special ticket, they put him in a taxi to Ogden to catch the train, which by this time had departed. The boy's family was to take the matter up with the travel agent, who would also be billed for the taxi fare.

When passengers create disturbances aboard trains or endanger or annoy other passengers, Amtrak removes them from the train. Records seem to show that such instances have been somewhat more common in recent months, possibly a result of hard economic times. However, they are really quite rare aboard Amtrak trains.

In late October a passenger on train 66, the NIGHT OWL at Philadelphia was said to be causing a disturbance. Amtrak police there removed him from the train by force. He was found locked in the restroom of an Amfleet car. He suffered a broken arm in the incident.

Also in late October an elderly woman passenger on train 1, the SUNSET LIMITED, was reported creating a disturbance thruout the trip. Amtrak removed her from the train and placed her on a bus instead.

It would appear that an Amtrak train is the best way of traveling if one wants to be well-protected from the hazards inherent in trips away from home.

COMMENTS ON RTN 258

by Mike Blaszak

The yard shown in "I Was a Mail-Order Bride" (RTN 258, p.9) was Santa Fe's 21st Street Coach Yard in Chicago. This yard was vacated by Amtrak on Jun 30, 1981, when its 5-year lease on the property expired, and Chicago coach yard operations were consolidated in the 12th Street Yard. You could say the yard is more than "quasi-abandoned", as Santa Fe now has authority from the ICC to abandon its main line linking downtown Chicago and the yard with the Bridgeport drawbridge near Ashland Avenue.

(Page 9:) I can't see how the proposed Budd maglev line would foreclose conventional train service between Chicago and Milwaukee. Consider that the proposed O'Hare terminal would be inconvenient to the south suburbs and northwest Indiana, and that a change of trains would be required for downtown-to-downtown travel. (Incidentally, the 32-minute O'Hare-Milwaukee transit time quoted in the article would be shorter than CTA's time between O'Hare and Chicago.) As stated in my recent PTJ column, it would make better sense to extend this line to downtown Chicago in the event it is built.

Contrary to the statement on page 13, PRR's NORTHERN ARROW continued on its overnight run between Cincinnati and Mackinaw City into the early 1960s (last run in 1961, I think), altho it was weekly only by that time.

ILLINOIS STATION NOTES

An Amtrak porter recently informed me that the rotting hulk of the Englewood station, on Chicago's South Side, had been torn down, presumably by Conrail.

C&NW's Davis Street Station in Evanston was fire-damaged by vandals on Dec 1, but plans are to rebuild it.

On BN, the village of Brookfield and Brookfield Zoo are negotiating an agreement to keep the Hollywood station in service. BN originally wanted to consolidate Brookfield operations at the new Prairie Avenue station. Meanwhile, a new shelter and extended platforms are being constructed at West Hinsdale.

★ THE SPLIT ON THE SAN DIEGO BULLET TRAIN AMONG CRC RAIL SUPPORTERS

by David Smollar

Byron Nordberg, like many of his fellow residents in North San Diego County, actively opposes a proposed 160 m.p.h. bullet train between Los Angeles and San Diego.

But unlike the others, Nordberg has been mining the waters against the train in his capacity as president of the state's only lobbying group for better California rail passenger service.

With several other members of Citizens for Rail California following his lead, Nordberg is calling the proposal a $3-billion white elephant that would not be patronized and would kill cheaper efforts to improve the present Amtrak line.

The irony of dedicated rail supporters harshly criticizing the proposal has not been lost on other opponents of the bullet train. An organized group of more than 600 has embraced Nordberg's offers of assistance in fighting the privately financed project on environmental and economic grounds.

Anger at Statements

The irony has not been lost either on members of Nordberg's group who are willing to give the proposal a chance, including Carl Schiermeyer, a former vice president of the group and now an official of the firm that wants to build the train. They are angry at Nordberg's public statements, which they believe are locking the group into a position that could ultimately ruin its effectiveness.

A statewide meeting of the 700-member group may be held as early as this month to try to hammer out a position statement.

But that meeting could prove as bitter as the present debate over the planned 130-mile line, which is being promoted by American High Speed Rail Corp., a new firm whose two top officials formerly worked for Amtrak.

The company hopes to begin construction late this year and complete the job by 1988. But it must first meet several state government requirements, overcome environmental opponents and complete studies to convince investors that the line can be run at a profit.

"CRC is incredibly angered over this project and (those who suggest otherwise) are a small minority," said Nordberg, a retired U.S. Marine colonel and private transportation consultant in Oceanside.

But Sacramento member Leif Lang, who works in the train section of the California Department of Transportation, believes that the group is probably divided 50-50. "It's clear there's a pretty serious internal split," Lang said.

Co-founder George Falcon, attempting to put the best possible light on matters, said there is no split because there is no official position yet. "We want more facts," Falcon said. "Byron is speaking without authority and should be reprimanded."

Whether authorized or not, Nordberg has blasted the train on radio, helped coastal opponents refine arguments and planted doubts among city officials as chairman of Oceanside's transportation advisory committee.

Basically, citizens group members led by Nordberg do not believe figures from American High Speed, which show that 60,000 people a day would ride 86 trains. The Amtrak line carries about 3,000 passengers a day on 14 trains.

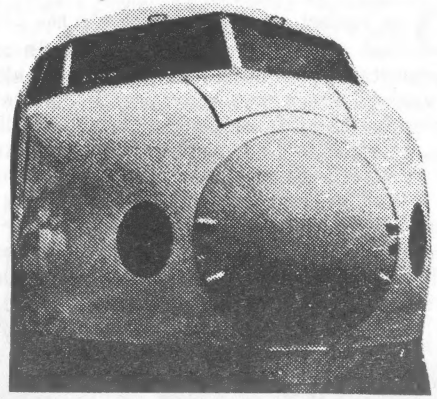
Ridership Potential Questioned

"The ridership just wouldn't be there," said Adrian Herzog of Chatsworth, vice president of the group. "We see a limit for potential riders to 16 daily Amtrak roundtrips (32 trains) with running times between 1½ and two hours."

Since its founding in 1975, the organization has given important backing to successful efforts by Caltrans and Amtrak to increase the number of daily Amtrak trains. There are 14, compared to six in 1975, as well as more trains between Los Angeles and San Francisco. In addition, the state has appropriated money for station and roadbed improvements.

Nordberg's backers see the present service at the takeoff point for expansion at a fraction of the cost for a single-line bullet train.

"The present railroad system is vastly underutilized and a new one just isn't needed from scratch," Noel Braymer, Los Angeles area director of the group, said. "The Japanese built their bullet train to compensate for a line already at overcapacity."



"A bullet train would be a colossal failure and destroy all the work done up until now on Amtrak," Herzog added.

But to members open to the proposal, it is the five years of effort to improve Amtrak service that should be counted as a failure. With a one-way running time of 2 hours and 45 minutes between Los Angeles and San Diego, the trains run 10 minutes slower than they did seven years ago. There is cooperation by private freight railroads, which own the rails and participate only to the minimum required by law.

"We've had a total lack of progress with the railroads," Lang said. "We haven't even been able to get stations renovated after five years of having money available. I don't want to kill off a bullet train at this point, because something brand new can prove to be much better than the existing service.

'No Reason to Oppose It'

"If it's a private venture, there's no reason to oppose it if capitalists can raise the money to invest."

Schiermeyer of American High Speed said Nordberg's plans for Southern California network based on Amtrak would be "the ideal solution if everyone cooperated."

"If I were Santa Fe and believed the (bullet train) ridership estimates, I would invest several hundred million dollars with Amtrak and get the average speed of trains up to 70 m.p.h. (from the present 52). At that speed, you'd crack the market," he said.

"But the railroads aren't the least bit interested and there are no institutional arrangements to shove plans down their throats."

Greg Thompson, a doctoral candidate in transportation studies at the University of California, Irvine, and a researcher for the rail group, called Nordberg's plans a pie-in-the-sky fantasy that has damaged the group's credibility.

Plan Ridiculed

In particular, Thompson ridiculed a plan by Nordberg and Herzog for train service from San Diego to San Francisco by way of San Bernardino, avoiding Los Angeles.

"After seven years of lobbying, we still have no operating improvements on Amtrak to speak of and trains are less cost-effective than before. Now we have a live proposal (for a bullet train) with private money that we at least ought to back cautiously for the moment until we see if the figures prove correct or not," he said.

He predicted that the rail group would break up into impotent factions if the issue is not resolved shortly. In fact, Lang and other Northern California members are gearing to oust the officers at the upcoming annual meeting next month.

But Falcon want to head off a permanent split. To that end, he wants an official position on the bullet train worked out immediately.

"We need more information, period," Falcon said. "But we shouldn't close our minds, either. I've seen marketing studies not worth a plugged nickel," said Falcon, who publishes Key Magazine in Los Angeles. "But I have the highest respect for the people putting this project together. They're not dreamers."

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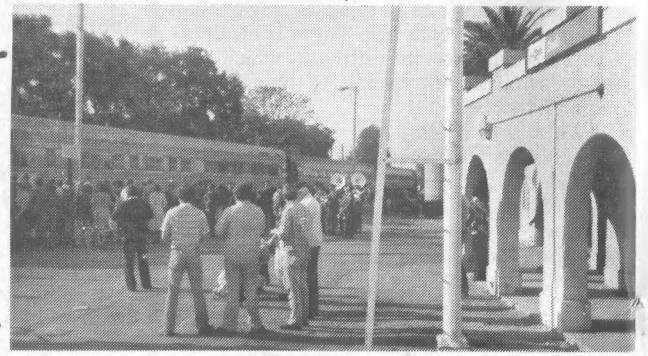
★ A TEN-YEAR RAIL SETBACK IN CALIFORNIA ★

Anti-Train Governor Axing Most Passenger Trains

One wonders whether California's new Governor, George Deukmejian, realizes what a can of worms he is opening in coming down so hard on rail passenger transportation in the state. Even before his Jan 10 State of the State Message, it was well known that Deukmejian was set to cut out funds for all the 403-b trains in the state budget except the SAN DIEGANS, as well as axing the newly-inaugurated Oxnard-Los Angeles commuter trains, and sparing only the long-standing San Francisco-San Jose commute runs. When his Jan 10 address was made, the Governor went out of his way to refer to trains as "exotic alternative transportation schemes"--a quotation that was repeated over and over in the press and which may live on with some of Spiro Agnew's fancy phrases.

Deukmejian (his name was misspelled in our last issue) is obviously no lover of trains. He is evidently a lover of cars and highways, for he said he seeks to build and repair freeways instead, and he obviously would like to see everyone in the state driving around in cars instead of riding mass transit or trains.

His proposed budget for the next fiscal year (which begins July 1) would eliminate 75% of the daily roundtrip rail miles between Los Angeles and the Bay Area (in cutting out the two SAN JOAQUINS and the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA), would leave the entire San Joaquin Valley without rail service, would eliminate rail service to Yosemite National Park for all Americans, would cut out the commuter service between L.A. and Oxnard which took four years of negotiation to realize, and would set the state back ten years in rail passenger accomplishments. Not only that, but the planned restoration of the San Francisco-Monterey DEL MONTE is put in serious jeopardy, as there are no funds in the Deukmejian budget to run it, altho funds to improve the line and prepare for the startup are in the current budget.



Inaugural run of the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA at Davis CA Oct 22, 1981. New state budget proposal eliminates this hard-won train from timetable. Photo by Ted Blishak.

The state faces a deficit of $1.5 billion in the next fiscal year, and the $11 million that Deukmejian seeks to save by eliminating trains represents only seven-tenths of one percent of the deficit, but it creates a maximum amount of hardship in the state by striking so sharply at the transportation infrastructure that the people of the state depend upon. Deukmejian wants a better business climate in the state, but he has to realize that travel is a necessary part and parcel of business. As State Assemblyman Sam Farr of Carmel told the Monterey Peninsula Herald, "This issue (of loss of DEL MONTE funds) affects tourism on the Monterey Peninsula and the administration wants to eliminate it."

Actually, the threatened trains could be operated for less than $11 million, according to a Caltrans source. Cuts in Caltrans could be made in a more useful, more thoughtful way. Instead of cutting out the trains that are operated, the demonstration projects program could be eliminated, the technical assistance branch could be cut, the bus transit section could be eliminated, the transfer

facilities and services section could be expended--a lot of fat could be cut from Caltrans without eliminating the trains. Perhaps the best way of saving the state's trains would be to take them out of Mass Transit and place them in a separate organization somewhat like New Jersey Transit, that would be insulated from politics. A Caltrans source suggested a proposed California Passenger Rail Program, which could be operated with only about 10-20 people, saving a good deal of money. Also, new funding sources should be considered. The coming gas tax could be partially used for helping the 403-b program. (Rail supporters interested in the gas tax idea should write to Bill Lockyer, in care of the State Capitol, Sacramento CA 95814, urging him to support the use of 20% of it for the 403-b funding program.)

First run of the northbound Oxnard commuter train, at Panorama City station, Oct 18, 1982. Photo by Dan Lovegren.

There is a good chance of saving the trains, if rail supporters write letters to their legislators. The budget won't take effect until July 1, and the trains will run at least until then (except the Oxnard commuter, which could be cut off with short notice; the funds being used for it could run out very soon).

On Jan 12 a press conference of rail supporters was held at the Sacramento Amtrak station, with a heavy attendance from the media. Widely quoted by the press was Catherine Thompson of Citizens for Rail California, who said that the cuts would wipe out all these trains, but would not save enough money to build one mile of freeway. Wayne Holdgren of Modern Transit Society of Sacramento spoke. (Sacramento seems more concerned about the SPIRIT than the Bay Area does--the train has never been well advertised in the San Francisco area.)

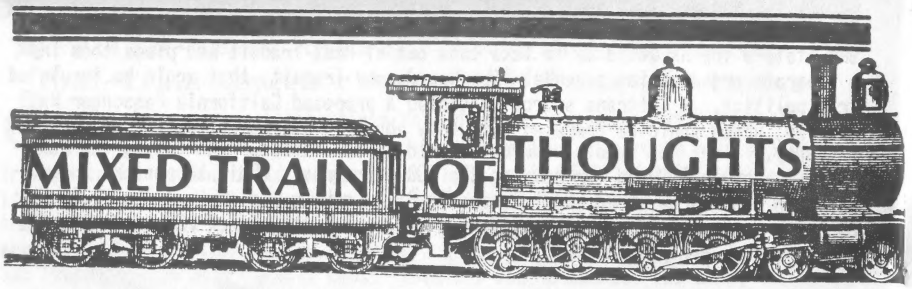
According to a Caltrans source, the SAN DIEGANS and the San Francisco Peninsula trains won't survive either, even tho their funding remains in, for Caltrans will not under the new administration make a POSITIVE effort to promote trains. If the administration decides from its very first day that these trains are not cost-effective, they will certainly be inclined to cut out the rest later.

It is said that the SPIRIT is not garnering a very high ridership. However, its passenger miles/train mile (PM/TM) of about 75 in its first year is higher than the 403-b SAN DIEGANS in their first year--70 PM/TM. Likewise with the new SAN JOAQUIN runs--their performance does not differ greatly from the SAN DIEGANS except that they are newer and haven't built up as much clientele yet.

The proposal to extend the SPIRIT to Reno, Nevada is still being discussed, and a hearing on the matter is being held in Reno on Jan 19. Extension of the train to Reno would certainly help its ridership and make it more secure in the eyes of the budgeteers, but extension won't come unless the train is first saved.

Caltrans blames Amtrak in part for not helping the SAN JOAQUINS along more. A Caltrans proposal for a Pittsburg CA station and for trackwork at Port Chicago to eliminate time-consuming switching are just now being agreed upon by Amtrak, a year after they were requested.

What are needed most to help save the trains are letters. The most critical persons to write to are: Willie Brown, Speaker of the Assembly; David Roberti, President Pro-tem of the Senate; John Vasconcellos, chairman of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee; Senator Al Alquist. The address of all of them is State Capitol Building, Sacramento CA 95814.



THAT AUTO-TRAIN SERVICE on Amtrak is being planned is more than a speculation, as we noted in issue 257. A Denver newspaper reported the plan, according to NARP. The run would be between the Northeast and Florida, as with the defunct Auto-Train Corporation. Amtrak's Board of Directors reportedly is to be asked to approve the project at its Jan 19 meeting in Washington. The Denver report said that auto-carrying routes in other locations could be added in the future. In RTN 257 we reported that the four sets of twin-unit diners being converted to head-end power by Amtrak are earmarked for the auto-carrying service.....

ALL AMDINETTES AND CLUB CARS in the Midwest have been reassigned to the Northeast Corridor, and Amcafes substituted on the Midwestern runs. The cars were reassigned to Metroliner service. NARP and other rail supporters questioned and complained about this move. Amtrak's Marketing Department justified the move as giving "the greatest benefit to the Corporation" at this time. The Department may be right, but the attitude expressed bothers us. Shouldn't Amtrak be concerned with the greatest benefit to rail passengers rather than to itself? (Remember "What's good for General Motors is good for America"?) Marketing said that when all the Amfleet II food service cars are delivered, the corporation would reevaluate the assignments.....

★ ★ ★

AMTRAK'S TOTAL REVENUE in fiscal year 1982 was $51.5 million higher than the previous year, the corporation bragged in a Dec 31 release. And this in spite of a 12.6% decline in passenger miles. Said Amtrak, "The decline was attributed to the general recession, to discounted air fares, and to a startup period required by Amtrak's new computer reservation system in the first quarter of the fiscal year. Amtrak, which ranks behind only four domestic airlines and one bus company in total passengers served, maintained its ridership base at 19 million passengers in FY 1982 compared to 20.6 million in 1981. Amtrak also showed a healthy increase in annual total revenue, from $506.3 million in 1981 to $557.8 million in 1982.

"Amtrak officials predict a 10% increase in rail passenger traffic for 1983, along with a 22% increase in total corporate revenue. The Air Transport Association of America is prediciting a modest 3 to 5% upturn in 1983 airline passenger traffic. In addition to improving its 1982 revenue, Amtrak was also able to improve service to its customers at the same time... ticket revenue in 1982 was more than $426 million, with the rest coming from other corporate profit centers such as real estate, sales of surplus cars, assembling mass transit cars for other companies, and by overhauling equipment for state transit authorities. And... Amtrak racked up a 79.1% on-time record, the best in the company's 11-year history. Improved on-time, combined with service improvements on board the trains and the conversion to all-electric equipment, has reduced customer complaints by 50% in 1981 and another 25% in 1982.

"While Amtrak does not offer 'Bullet Train' service, its Metroliner Service trains reach speeds of 110mph in the NE Corridor. And Amtrak has requested that the federally mandated speed limit there be increased to 120mph in 1983.

Such performance has enabled the corporation to reduce its running times in the NE Corridor to 2:49 hours between Washington and New York City. Even conventional passenger trains in the Corridor are making schedules that are the fastest ever operated due to all the improvements in the NE Corridor..."

Amtrak said that the "crowning touch" of its 1982 highlights was the reduction of 70 hours per week in the overall system schedule, "a promise of more to come in 1983".....

★ ★ ★

DISCOUNT FARE COMING? It was reported to us that information came over the Amtrak Arrow system that a new "All Aboard Fare", rather similar to the defunct Anywhere Fare that offered a roundtrip to anywhere on the Amtrak system for $225, would be announced very soon. As we go to press, no announcement has been made by Amtrak, and reportedly the corporation is still considering the special fare promotion. NARP said that it had been trying to impress upon Amtrak the "desperate" need for more competitive fares, especially outside the NE Corridor, to "boost sagging ridership." Meanwhile, on Jan 12, Amtrak announced a new marketing campaign with the "All Aboard Amtrak" slogan (but no All Aboard Fare) in a press release which read in part: "A new slogan, 'All Aobard Amtrak,' replaces the now retired "America's Getting Into Training," introduced in 1979, which, in turn, had replaced "WE've Been Working on the Railroad," that had been Amtrak's advertising and promotional theme since 1976. Amtrak's VP-Sales Jim Callery in a press briefing here said that each slogan represented a different phase of Amtrak's historic development. The earliest slogan, he said, represented what was going on at the time. Amtrak was beginning to acquire new equipment to replace the 'rolling antiques' inherited when it began service in 1971. Congress authorized what was to become the $2.5 billion NE Corridor Improvement Project. Amtrak was beginning to get its act together.

"The later slogan, 'America's Getting Into Training,' which became one of the best known jingles on radio and television, represented distinct gains in customer acceptance. As more and improved equipment, including the magnificent new double-deck Superliners, came into service, Amtrak's on-time performance and other service criteria also improved. The new slogan, Mr. Callery added, doesn't ask for patience and understanding, as did 'We've Been Working on the Railroad' and is far more aggressive than was 'America's Getting Into Training.' 'All Aboard Amtrak' is positive, single-minded and memorable. It signifies what we are today and what we will be for the future. It is a phrase that reflects all the rich heritage of the railroad and is a powerful call to action.'"

'VP-Transportation Marketing Robert Gall said that the new slogan and marketing approach results in part from a research study to examine travelers' preferences and perceptions about all modes of transportation including Amtrak. The results indicated six major characteristics people want from a carrier: (1) an extensive national network; (2) modern equipment; (3) solid on-time performance; (4) strong on-board amenities; (5) fast, convenient reservation and ticketing systems, and (6) a stable, reliable organization. While Amtrak offers all of these features, unfortunately many of the persons surveyed did not know we could deliver these benefits. The need to combat misconceptions resulted in our new communications strategy. A new theme was the next logical step,' said Gall. Mr Callery pointed out Amtrak is truly more a nationwide carrier than are any of the major airlines, serving more cities (over 500) than off of them combined... Amtrak's first ads appearing this week will be in 'a frankly competitive spirit' and will appear under such headlines as, 'Maybe Your Next Flight Should Be on a Train' and 'Not Everyone Was Meant to Fly.' 'This new look,' Mr. Gall said, 'was designed to position Amtrak strongly as the major competitor we are and to convince the traveling public that Amtrak provides those things that make passenger train travel the better alternative.'" Amtrak said that its ads would appear in such nationwide publications as Time, National Geographic and USA Today.....

AMTRAK AUTO-FERRY SERVICE: A further word: Just as we go to press, we have information on the proposed revival of Auto-Train-type service on the East Coast. Evidently it is to run Lorton VA-Sanford FL, as did the Auto-Train. Amtrak would take over use of Auto-Train's Sanford terminal, which is still owned by the bankrupt company's liquidators. The Lorton VA terminal has been sold to another party. Amtrak could either carry passengers and autos on the same train, or carry autos on a special train and let passengers make their own personal travel arrangements on an Amtrak passenger train. The Denver Post reported (Jan 7) that Amtrak President Graham Claytor had written a letter Dec 3 stating that Amtrak was interested in beginning such a service sometime in 1983. The letter probably went to Carl L. Shipley, who himself was trying to revive the Auto-Train operation, and wanted to lease equipment and get assignment of track rights from Amtrak. Shipley was disappointed, of course, by the Amtrak plan, but did not criticize the rail corporation. His own studies showed that the operation would be profitable. Amtrak could apparently either lease or purchase auto-carrying cars from the Auto-Train liquidators. The Orlando (FL) Sentinel (Jan 8) quoted Congressman William Lehman of Miami, who is chairman of the House Appropriations Transportation subcommittee, as saying he would like the service to extend to Miami. He expressed some concern that the project might increase Amtrak's subsidy needs, but said he would support it if it helped tourism in Florida. Amtrak is asking its Board of Directors for authorization to proceed with the Auto-Ferry Service at its Jan 19 meeting.....

OUTGOING TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR of California, Adriana Gianturco, received the Golden Spike Award, presented by NARP Director George Falcon of Southern California, on Oct 18, the occasion of the startup of the Oxnard-L.A. commuter train. This photo appeared in Falcon's Key Magazine (Dec 30-Jan 6 issue).....

AMTRAK DIRECTORS' MEETING of Jan 19 will include a request that the Board approve an agreement with American High Speed Rail Corporation. An Amtrak spokesman was at a loss to explain the nature of the proposed agreement. The meeting will also cover approval for retiring some locomotives, delegation of authority for the NEC Improvement Program and for the NEC Coordination Board. Commitment Approval Requests are on the agenda for the following projects: Vehicle fleet replacement program; construction of fuel dispensing facility; NEC right of way facility improvements; Harrisburg line right of way improvements; and acquisition of track maintenance equipment.....

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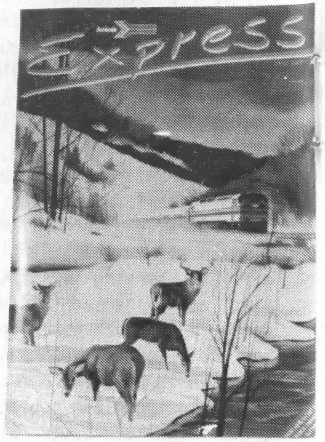

AMTRAK'S "EXPRESS" MAGAZINE, beginning with the Jan issue (whose cover is shown here), will be distributed on all trains in the system, and not just in the Northeast. The Jan issue begins the third year of publication of the slick-paper magazine, which is published for Amtrak by East/West Network, Inc. The attractive cover painting for this issue, done by Dennis Luzak, pictures an Amfleet train in a snowy mountain scene (the locomotive shown is an amalgam of several locomotive types).....

A UNION PACIFIC President's Inspection Special train arrived westbound in Salt Lake City on Jan 10 with the following consist: engines 3466, 3170, 3674 (SD40s), steam generator dorms 302 & 304, and cars 1605 "Sun Manor", 1611 "Sun Slope", 1609 "Sun Ridge" (11-dbr slprs), diner 4810, lounge 6203, 105, "Idaho", Cabarton (crew car), "Arden", 111,

103, 104 and 114. The train split into two there. On Jan 10 all the cars from "Cabarton" to the rear left with two engines toward Los Angeles. On Jan 12 two more engines and the remainder of the cars left for Los Angeles.....

THE EMPIRE BUILDER is all sold out in sleeping car space between Seattle and Belton MT on every single Thursday for the entire summer, a reader discovered when he tried to get reservations for a roundtrip on the train in June. A Seattle travel agency reserved all those slots in the only sleeper assigned to the train. But are the tickets for all that travel really sold, the reader wanted to know, and wrote a complaint to Amtrak headquarters about it. When queried by RTN, an Amtrak spokesman said that such group reservations must be approved by Amtrak headquarters. Would another sleeper be added? It would if one is available, said Amtrak.....

GOLDEN SPIKE EXHIBITION special cancellation shown here will be applied to letters mailed at the Golden Spike Exhibition Station in Ogden, Utah on Feb 12 and 13. Zip code of the station is 84401.....

FT. JACKSON SPECIAL train returning from New York after the holidays left Penn Station at 7:55pm (due out 7:45) on Jan 2. Consist of the train was E60 engine 960 and cars 21207, 21059, 21014, 21256, 20028, 21218, 21114, 21071, 20031, 21079, 21255 and baggage 1243.....

★ ★ ★

THE FORT PITT, Amtrak's Pittsburgh-Altoona PA trains, numbered 37-38-39, will have their last runs this month. Last run will be the westbound #39 from Altoona to Pittsburgh on Sunday, Jan 30.....

"SANTA CLAUS TRAIN" ran on Dec 23 between Boston and Albany; this was the LAKE SHORE LIMITED with Conrail engineer George Munger aboard, who, dressed as Santa, gave out candy at each stop. His daughters were Santa Elves. Scenes of this were shown nationwide on cable TV. Munger does it every year.....

"THE REAL PEOPLE" TV series is apparently going to do another one on Amtrak, this time from Chicago to Boston on the LAKE SHORE in May, for showing in the fall, reports Kevin Gregoire.....

ST. LOUIS TRAINS may move back to Union Station. Amtrak is reportedly holding serious negotiations with the developers of the station to return to it. NARP members in the St. Louis area were instrumental in getting the plan moving.....

★ ★ ★

DOME OBSERVATION LOUNGES 9321 and 9331 were reported heading north on the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS on Nov 30, believed destined for Beech Grove to be converted into head-end power cars. The first converted dome car for the CAPITOL LIMITED is expected to be placed in service in February.....

THE NORTH STAR will have a new Friday schedule starting Jan 21, when it will leave the Twin Cities at 6pm instead of 8am, reaching Duluth at 9:35pm. It will leave Duluth at 10:30 pm, reaching Twin Cities at 2am Saturday. This change will allow it to serve as a Ski Train to the Spirit Mountain ski area. Andy Selden suggested the arrangement after Duluth civic groups wanted a ski train, and BN and Amtrak approved the change in a record three weeks or less.....

LATE NEWS FLASH: The Interstate Commerce Commission on Jan 17 decided in favor of the SP in the controversy of charges for operating the Oxnard commuter trains. The state must pay $580,000 per month, not the $70,000 that Caltrans thought appropriate. A group of Oxnard commuters was formed and gathered 1800 signatures in two days protesting the train's discontinuance. A bill, A.B. 13X would withdraw funds for the trains this fiscal year.....

SAN DIEGAN LINE is getting a 25% off discount promotional fare. The discount applies to round trip fares purchased between Jan 10 and Apr 23. SAN DIEGAN ridership figures were found to have been counted too high in the period of Oct 1981

Carl Loucks

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thru Mar 1982--they proved to be 37,472 less than what Amtrak originally reported. Thus the fare promotion. Caltrans had considered them too high, and figured the Oct 1981 fare increase was a disaster. It was.....

THE ROYAL ROSARIANS, a group of 108 civic boosters from Portland, Oregon, left Portland Dec 29 to travel to Southern California on the COAST STARLIGHT asa promotional effort for Oregon tourism. The group, which included the Mayor of Portland, used an open-platform (SP?) business car on the trip. At Sacramento the train was late and they missed meeting the Vice-Mayor.....

SEABOARD SYSTEM RAILROAD was officially in business Jan 1, a merger of Seaboard Coast Line and Louisville & Nashville and subsidiaries. It's a unit of CSX.....

SOUTHBOUND EAGLE DERAILED south of St. Louis Jan 14, with a 5-hr delay; no injuries. Cause was believed to be a spread track.....

CARS & CONSISTS

*MOUNT VERNON, train 146, New York Jan 2: engine 900 (AEM-7); cars 20123 (food car), 21818, 21043, 21882, 21877, 21130, Maryland DOT cars on at NY: 1405, 1406, 1401, 1404, 1409, 1502; food car 20051.

*SILVER STAR, train 82, Winter Park FL Dec 30, 1982: engines 322, 388; cars 1264, 1450, 2436 "Pacific Crest", 2089 "Loch Tay", 25042, 25088, 25060, 25084, 28017, 8518, 8507, (St. Pete section:) 3121, 25014, 25049, 25083, 25009, 2440 "Pacific Beach". Train on time, sold out.

*SILVER METEOR, train 87, Orlando Dec 21: engine 386; cars 1129, 3117, 25052, 25001, 25055, 25082, 2456 "Willow Grove", Melco Labs 1518 "Fort Monmouth", Melco Labs 692 "Fort Benning" (last two ran Richmond-Orlando; to run Jan 5 on SILVER STAR to Miami; later to Gold Coast Rwy Museum, Ft. Lauderdale, on SCL freight).

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, San Jose Dec 31: engines SP 3198, Atk 244 & 238; cars 1151, 39925, 31008, 31020, 34076, 34066, 34048, 39963, 31007, 33009, 38019, 32022, 32046, SP 106 "Oregon", SP 141 "Oakland", SP 140 "Stanford". 80-100 boarded.

*CARDINAL, train 51, Washington Dec 22: engines 306, 277; cars 1361, 2441, 2983, 28019, 4720, 4613, 4614, 4012, 3111, 4617, 4648, 21057, 21092,4728.

*PALMETTO, train 89, Washington Dec 22: engines 279, 271; cars 1350, 4002, 4608, 4611, 4705, 3123 "General Lafayette", 4700, 4624, 25093, 25092.

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7, Milwaukee Dec 1: engines 355, 314, 304; cars 1173, 39920, 34077, 34089, 33003, 38004, 39972, 31003, 32023, 32029.

*MARQUETTE, train 334, Milwaukee Dec 1: engine 374; cars 31030, 31007.

*VIA train 74, Windsor, Ont., Jan 1: engine 6900 (LRC), steam generator car 15454; cars 5285 (6-axle coach, CN colors), 3207 coach-snack, 5617 coach, 3033 coach-snack, 5738 club car (deadhead?).

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"It's premature to condemn the Oxnard-Los Angeles service. The pricing of S.P. is incredible--$580,000 a month just for use of the tracks. That's being appealed by Caltrans and they've won every other appeal like this. I thought (reform governor) Hiram Johnson had straightened the railroads out, but they're actually worse."

--Ed Davis (California State Senator and former Los Angeles police chief) in L.A. Herald Examiner, Jan 6.

AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

NOVEMBER 1982 FIGURES--SECOND COLUMN IS % INCREASE/(DECREASE) OVER 1981

METROLINERS	89,034	.2
NORTHEAST CORRIDOR CONVENTIONAL	482,123	(10.5)
NEW ENGLAND METROS	7,425	.0
NEW HAVEN-SPRINGFIELD	18,867	(8.9)
NEW YORK-PHILADELPHIA	171,600	.5
PHILADELPHIA-HARRISBURG	63,759	(8.5)
NEW YORK-HARRISBURG	23,985	(11.0)
TOTAL NORTHEAST CORRIDOR	856,793	(6.4)
NEW YORK-ALBANY-NIAGARA FALLS	60,037	(9.0)
CHICAGO-ST.LOUIS	21,650	(10.3)
CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE	11,206	(13.1)
CHICAGO-DETROIT-TOLEDO	29,954	(12.9)
CHICAGO-CARBONDALE	13,757	(16.4)
CHICAGO-QUINCY	6,908	(7.6)
LOS ANGELES-SAN DIEGO	75,095	(17.3)
SEATTLE-EUGENE	4,968	(46.5)
WASHINGTON-MARTINSBURG	15,948	(12.5)
OAKLAND-BAKERSFIELD	14,790	2.1
NEW YORK-MONTREAL	4,598	(5.5)
CHICAGO-PORT HURON(TORONTO)	7,382	(21.9)
MINNEAPOLIS-DULUTH	1,846	(52.8)
CHICAGO-VALPARAISO	19,841	10.5
CHICAGO-INDIANAPOLIS	4,290	(21.5)
CHICAGO-KANSAS CITY	8,385	5.0
PHILADELPHIA-PITTSBURGH	8,069	(7.3)
PORTLAND-EUGENE		(100.0)
LOS ANGELES-SACRAMENTO	6,613	(10.6)
MIAMI-TAMPA	1,891	.0
TOTAL SHORT DISTANCE	317,228	(12.6)
WASHINGTON-MONTREAL	7,681	(7.2)
NEW YORK-FLORIDA	41,195	(2.9)
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/WASHINGTON	17,326	2.6
CHICAGO-CIN-WAS/NEW YORK	5,145	.0
CHICAGO-SEATTLE	26,541	19.4
CHICAGO-OAKLAND(SFO)	19,437	(8.2)
CHICAGO-LOS ANGELES	16,239	(19.9)
CHICAGO-NEW ORLEANS	13,182	(9.7)
CHICAGO-TEXAS	4,379	(10.1)
LOS ANGELES-NEW ORLEANS	3,343	(44.8)
LOS ANGELES-SEATTLE	31,320	.4
CHICAGO-NEW YORK/BOSTON	24,390	10.7
BOSTON-NEWPORT NEWS	6,974	1.9
NEW YORK-SAVANNAH	9,036	(13.7)
SEATTLE-SALT LAKE CTY/CHICAGO	10,774	(20.9)
NEW YORK-NEW ORLEANS	17,114	2.9
LOS ANGELES/OGDEN-CHICAGO	7,272	(21.6)
TOTAL LONG DISTANCE	261,348	(2.0)
SPECIAL TRAINS	3,465	188.3
SYSTEM TOTAL	1,438,834	(7.0)

Amtrak's ridership figures for November, given here, have just been released by the corporation. The October figures appeared in RTN 258.

Overall, Amtrak system ridership was down 7% compared to 1981--a disappointing fact after the 2.7% drop in October. In spite of the Thanksgiving holidays in November, the termination of the discount "Anywhere Fare" probably cost Amtrak patronage.

Patronage was pretty much down across the board, with all categories of trains suffering. In the short distance category, only two routes showed small increases. Under long distance, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED put on a notable showing, with a 10.7% increase. Obviously, the effects of the recession are shown in these figures. The Special Train category was up a hefty amount. (The EMPIRE BUILDER's increase of 19.4% was due to a change from tri-weekly to daily operation.)

For comparison figures, the system total ridership in Nov 1981 was 1,546,559 (which was down 6.5% from Nov 1980).

The 100% drop for Portland-Eugene reflects the discontinuance of service on that route (except for the COAST STARLIGHT).

RAIL FANTRIPS

Feb 26: Conway Branch Snow Train; Boston-Sanbornville & Ossipee NH, RT; also Framington & Gonic NH branches, weather permitting. $34.95 before 2/16; $39.95. Supper $3.50. Mass Bay RRE, Box 525 Bedford MA 01730. (617)581-0411 6-10pm EST.

May 29: Challenger #3985 UP mainline excursion Denver/Laramie/Denver incl Sherman Hill (diesel on Colo portions). Rocky Mountain RR Club, PO Box 2391, Dept N, Denver CO 80231. SASE appreciated.

EXPRESS ADS

VIA RAIL CANADA, AMTRAK, EURAIL PASS, 20th CENTURY RAIL TOURS - tickets and reservations - WE KNOW HOW! One call does it all. Pay by credit card or check. Tickets mailed directly to you. Contact GREAT WESTERN TOURS, masters of rail travel, Sheraton Palace Hotel, Suite 900, San Francisco 94105. (415) 398-2994.

DINING CAR CHINA, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, stationery, rules, metal & Pullman items, annual reports. Many railroads. Long 37¢ stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213. Will buy items.

HELP TRANSPORT 2000 Saskatchewan fight the Pepin passenger rail cuts in court. Good results to date do not eliminate a desperate need for financial help. To restore key services, especially the SUPER, send your donation today to: Transport 2000 Saskathewan, Box 3594, Regina, Sask., S4P 3L7, Canada.

SWISS RAIL TOUR, April 15-23, 1983. Write: Rail/Road Tours, Hyde Park Travel Bureau, P.O. Box 24, Hyde Park, MA 02136.

Feb 18-21 Deluxe first class private cars, the Pullman,"National Border" and lounge car "Vista Pacifica" to Las Vegas & return via the DESERT WIND. Rio Vista Railways, P.O. Box 19992, Los Angeles, Calif. 90019.

May 19-June 12, 1983: Oriental Eclipse Express. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Java and Bali. Visit the Ambarawa Steam Rail Museum and ride the Jambu-Bedono cog rail line. View the total eclipse of the sun in east Java. 2-weeks $3195, 3-weeks $3995. Voyages of Discovery, 737 Pearl Street #210R, La Jolla, CA 92037. (619) 459-7250.

"ISSUES IN AMERICAN RAIL TRAVEL", RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & postage. Full details will be given later in RTN. Rail Travel News, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads: only $1.25 per square inch. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

LETTERS (continued from page 2)

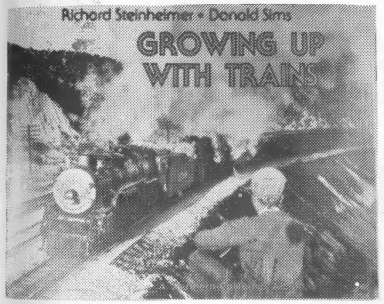
My rail travel experience began in 1968 on the Penn Central and Burlington Route, and not again until the mid-70s. I've always enjoyed trains as the best way to travel; however, I did encounter and observe many frustrating practices on those trips. I recall Amcafe attendants who mumble at passengers rather than take their requests, ticket agents uninformed of service available and refusing to sell tickets 30 minutes before train time even tho a train was over an hour late, and stations in desperate need of repair like the former NYC station at Rochester NY. At any rate, it is a pleasure now to be able to count on reliable service, friendly crews, and to look forward to future improvements.

It often appears that Amtrak's directors have undone many of their past decisions that were made to keep operations simple. These include restoration of station facilities; finding more trains with lounges, diners and domes; introduction of New England Metroliner service; truly first class service on the SILVER METEOR and SILVER STAR; improvements to the Amfleet coaches; and many more changes to make travel easier and better. It has taken Amtrak management many years to be in a position in which it is able to offer better and more convenient services. The success of the LAKE SHORE LIMITED can be cited as a perfect example of this. It wasn't long ago that tracks east of Rensselaer connecting to the Boston and Albany route had been torn up, and now the LAKE SHORE is one of Amtrak's most popular runs.

We are in an age when we can count on the train. Amtrak leadership and personnel at long last should be commended for their efforts in making train travel much better in the 1980s.

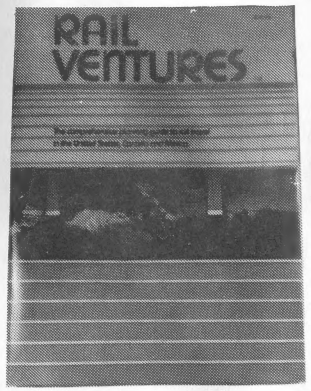
R. Richard Hawkes
West Buxton, Maine

BOOKS



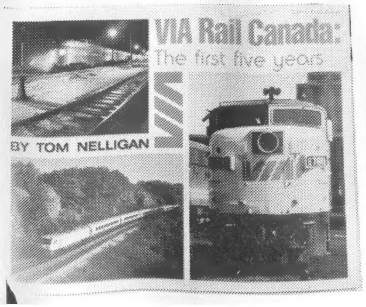
"Growing Up With Trains" was off the press at the end of the year and can now be purchased from stores or from publisher Interurban Press (Box 6444, Glendale CA 91205) for $16.95 plus $1.10 postage,and tax to Californians. This 11x8½, 112-page softbound picture book, subtitled "A Southern California Album", is by the well-known Richard Steinheimer and Donald Sims. This marvelous, nostalgic railfan effort covers the steam and diesel eras in Southern California with 145 black-&-white photos and 10 color, all of highest quality.

★ ★ ★



Only infrequently does a book like "Rail Ventures" come along--an almost single-handed labor of love by a talented individual and his friends and relatives. This book, just out, is a "comprehensive planning guide to rail travel in the U.S., Canada and Mexico." It's beautifully done and extremely informative, being organized by rail route, and giving route guides while another section provides maps and comprehensive information on cities reached by train. It has a big foldout map and a tourist railroad section. The book is on heavy coated stock and is liberally decorated with color and b&w photos, many of them by publisher Jack W. Swanson. The frontispiece gets our vote for the most beautiful color train photo of the year. 8½x11, 222 pages, softbound, $14.95 + $1 postage from Rail Ventures, PO Box 1877, Ouray CO 81427.

★ ★ ★



Also just out is "VIA Rail Canada: The First Five Years", and it's a book that has been needed. Author Tom Nelligan here pulls together in brilliant photos and informative text the far-flung empire of VIA Rail Canada. Many talented photographers are represented among the sparkling color and the sharp b&w photos. 11x8½, 80 pages, softbound, $12.50. (No information on postage charges when ordering from the publisher is given.) PTJ Publishing, Inc., PO Box 397, Park Forest IL 60466.

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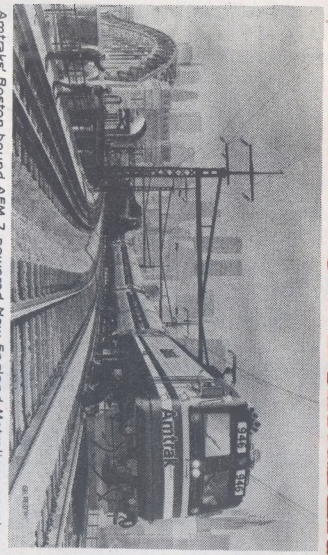

Amtraks' Boston-bound AEM-7 powered New England Metroliner passing the museum-bound GG-1 on the historic Hell Gate Bridge.

Amtrak's 1983 calendar, pictured here, is now available.

This year's calendar features another beautiful painting by artist Gil Reid, from a series done exclusively for Amtrak.

The calendars are $3.50 each. Or you can get 2 for $6.00 and 3 for $8.00. Calendars for 1980, 1981 and 1982 are also available at the same price.

To order, make checks payable:
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Amtrak's AMERICA'S GETTING INTO TRAINING